GOD AT WORK THROUGH HIS PEOPLE

The First Hundred Years of the Onecho Church

Introduction

In the closing years of the 19th Century, a number of Swiss immigrants, arriving in small family groups, moved into the little town of Almota on the Snake River in Eastern Washington State and onto farms just to the north. They brought little of this world's goods with them, but they were an industrious people, accustomed to hard work, and willing to take risks to obtain better lives for themselves and their descendents.

They were also men and women of faith, possessing a deep devotion to God and a love for his Church. One of their first group activities was that of sending one of their number "back East" to train for the ministry, and upon his return two years later with Certificate and a new bride they met in a private home and organized the First Mennonite Church of Colfax.

The next hundred years were not easy, either in their occupation of farming the steep hills of the Onecho community or in the work of the foundling church. There were no grand victories, no great spiritual awakenings, no great milestones. However, and perhaps more importantly, these were years of patiently serving the Lord in all the little and often unseen and unheralded activities that go to make up the work of the Church of Jesus Christ wherever it is found. The Lord added to the church as the children born into the homes of these Charter Members embarked upon their own spiritual journey of faith, and He added those from "outside," as neighbors, impressed by the steadfast industry and consistent living of these few Swiss families, came to observe and remained to worship.

This is the brief record of God working through the lives of the men and women who commenced and carried on the work of the Onecho Church over the past century, a century of progress but also a century of preparation for what lies ahead. May their natural and spiritual descendents do as well in this second century, until the Lord returns.

Perspective

On this 100th Anniversary of the founding of the First Mennonite Church of Colfax, now known as the Onecho Bible Church, we look back across the years to behold and wonder at the workings of God. For some of course, history is the record of the works of men, a re-telling of dates, places, and people, with the credit for anything accomplished being awarded to the individuals whose efforts seem to have brought it to pass. For us as Christians however, history is literally His Story, and we review the events of the past to see what He has been doing through dedicated and able men and women. It is our desire that we might become increasingly able to recognize his hand at work and that we might learn from the example of our spiritual ancestors how we might serve Him more effectively.

Certainly we recognize the danger enunciated by the cynic in his declaration that: "We learn nothing from history save that we learn nothing from history." It is possible to misunderstand, or to misinterpret the past and so to gain nothing from it. However, we must seek to follow the of-repeated injunction of Moses as he, in his rehearsal of the history of God's people as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy again and again urges Israel to "Remember". . . "Do."

Beginnings

Having thus revealed our philosophy of history, namely that it is the record of God at work among men and women and their acceptance or rejection of his revealed will, we embark upon the attempt to weave the many strands of information garnered from many sources into a recognizable tapestry, one that will enable us to recreate this first century of the Onecho Church. Some difficulties of the task stem from the fact that the minute books covering the first 45 years were destroyed in the fire that razed the home of Earnest Aeschliman, who was at the time the church secretary. As we will note in the course of this document, we have some records of particular groups within the church for some of these years, but the major record is lost to us.

We are indebted to Dwight Ensley, a leader in the Methodist group at Onecho for his "History of the First Mennonite Church of Colfax," prepared for and read by him on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the organization's founding. The majority of the other sources for this period draw heavily upon this document.

As Mr. Ensley records, the Rev. M.S. Anderson, a circuit-riding Methodist preacher organized a Methodist class in 1876 with four charter members as a nucleus for religious work in the community. The little log schoolhouse at the foot of the cemetery hill was the first meeting place for gatherings such as Sunday School or preaching services when the Rev. Anderson could be present. Later, when the new school house was built near the site where the present church stands services were held there.

In 1884 the little community was expanded by the arrival of the first trickle of what was to become a strong stream of Swiss Mennonites, coming for the most part from Canton Berne in Switzerland by way of Pulaski, Iowa. Two brothers and their sister, Sam, Paul and Rosina (Rosa) Aeschliman appeared that year to be followed in 1887 by their brother Fred and his wife Rosina (Rosa) and their three sons. Chris Schluneger and his wife Sophia who was the Aeschliman's sister, and Mr. and Mrs. Fred Nauert came at the same time. The Stevicks and Kaufmanns followed soon after. To quote Mr. Ensley, "Not only were these new settlers industrious farmers and tradesmen by nature and practice, but highly religious in character as well. The pioneer Sunday school and religious organization which had breathed out a bare existence for 14 years greatly appreciated their presence since musically inclined leaders were badly needed and the encouragement in the Christian way of life was an inspiration. Thus was launched a substantial colony of Mennnonites such as enriches any country both industrially and religiously."

Although the history of these early families is sparse, we know that the Aeschlimans had been baptized in early childhood into the German Reformed Church in Switzerland and had grown up to be devout Christians. Sam, the first son to immigrate had joined the Mennonite Church in Pulaski, Iowa pastored by his uncle the Rev. Philip Roulet, and although we have no records it is highly likely the other family members had joined also while in Pulaski before coming west to Almota where they initially lived.

It is obvious that these new members of the community, although working with the existing young Methodist group, yet desired to have a Mennonite Church. We have no access to their reasons, and can only conjecture. Perhaps they could not agree doctrinally with the Methodists, since as Mennonites they practiced believer baptism. This does not seem to have been of primary importance since they would permit Christians of other denominations who were baptized as infants to unite with them without being rebaptized, probably a concession made to their Methodist neighbors. Perhaps the language was a problem, since they decided from the beginning to have preaching in the German language and Sunday School in both German and English. It is possible

that they were not comfortable in the Episcopal type organization of the Methodist, being more at home with the Congregational type, or perhaps they felt they wanted a full-time pastor rather than having to depend upon the part-time ministry of a circuit rider. Whatever the reason, or reasons, in 1891 Paul Aeschliman went east to Halstead, Kansas to study for the ministry, a move that must have been made in preparation for the organization of a Mennonite Church.

Uncle Paul completed his studies in 1893, went to Pulaski where he married Phoebe Dieffenbach and returned to Onecho. On July 1 of that year, the Rev. J.B. Baer, field secretary and traveling minister of the General Conference of Mennonites of North America came to Onecho. The Mennonites met in a private home the Rev Baer serving as chairman, and the following charter was drawn up:

"In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Whereas it is the earnest desire of us, who love God our heavenly Father and have accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Friend, to unite together in true Worship and Service:

Since it is the religious concern of all such people *(to instruct their children) in the Bible Truth and to have them come early to the Knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour:

And since it is also the desire of such Christian people to help in the spreading of the Gospel in Missionary Endeavor here at home and abroad and to help and assist in the general work of the Church:

Be it resolved that we the undersigned gathered here this day, July the first 1893, do now take step and proceed to formulate a Church Organization to carry on the above-named purposes.

In this undertaking we seek the aid and guidance of our heavenly Father as it is manifested to his children through his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy spirit, Amen."

*(This clause must have been lost in copying and has been added D.A.)

Charter Members

Jacob Kaufman, Magdalena Kaufman, Joseph Stevick, Katie Stevick, Jacob Stevick, Lizzie Stevick, John Unziger, Mary Unziger, Magdalena Miller, Magdalena Rubin, Chris Nafziger, Pauline Nafziger, Fred Aeschliman, Rosa Aeschliman, Will Rubin, Rosa Rubin, Sam. R. Aeschliman, Earnest Aeschliman, Lou Roulet, Fredrika Nauert, Ed Reinhard, Paul Aeschliman, Phoebe Aeschliman, and Joseph Nafziger.

On the same day, Paul Aeschliman was unanimously elected Minister of the Gospel and the following day was ordained to the full ministry by the Rev. Bauer in the primitive school house.

The new group did not seem to have any constitution, until at the annual church meeting Jan 1. 1902 the following Articles or Resolutions were adopted:

1. That we the members of the Colfax Mennonite Church, Colfax, Washington adopt the Article of the Constitution of the General Conference concerning Secret Orders.
2. We believe that baptism upon confession of faith to be the nearest in accordance with the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. But Christians of other denominations who were baptized as infants, but live the Christian life, can unite with us without being rebaptized.
3. Members of other churches who wish to unite with our church through letter or the right hand of fellowship will apply to the Minister or trustees. 2 weeks time shall be given to the church. If no objection is made such shall be received as members.
4. The church council is composed of 3 members. The Pastor and 2 members elected for 2 years. One to be elected at each annual meeting.
5. Each member to pay at least 50 cents annually into the church fund. The Genator (Minister?) to receive at least $30. annually. (Later on the dues were raised to $2. per annum and later to $3.)
6. We as a church do not believe in closed Communion. Any Christian who is at peace with God and his neighbor is invited at the Lord's table.

Since the little Methodist class still held services in the schoolhouse (there being no church building as yet) the spirit of Christian cooperation was begun. The two denominations, each with a little flock, decided to worship together. Uncle Paul preached on three Sundays a month, regularly in German followed by a repetition in English. On Sundays when the Methodist pastor preached, Uncle Paul was often serving in distant communities or at some schoolhouse where Christian worshippers met to hear the Word.

The First Building

For two years the services were held in the school house and also occasionally in private homes. On account of lack of room and convenience, in the spring of 1895 it was decided to build a church. I have the record of a talk given my uncle, Milton Ensley Sr., a member of the Methodist group at Onecho, on the history of the Onecho community. His comment on the erection of the first church building is

interesting. "When it was decided to build the church, first it was a toss-up whether the building should belong to the Methodists or Mennonites, there being about the same number of each. After due consideration the Methodist folks said to the Mennonites, "You men are good carpenters, you build the church and we will all help." The land was deeded by J.J. Tompkins.

In the Mennonite records we read: "A depression in business had then reached the mountain top, which was a very severe test of our faith, especially severe because several who would have been in the lead were rather against or neutral. Early in July 1895, just five weeks after the beginning, the church was dedicated practically free of debts. Material being reasonable and the work all done and donated by the members. With the Prophet Samuel we also could say! The Lord has helped."

Twenty one years afterward, in the year 1926, this primitive church was replaced by a larger, up to date and well-equipped building which also was dedicated, Dec 1926 practically free of debts. Again the members could say, "The Lord has helped, Praise His Name."

We have records of the trustees of the church from 1901. In those early days, some names appear over and over namely, Fred Aeschliman, Will Rubin, Sam R. Aeschliman, M.E. Dieffenbach and Ed Sommers. From 1920 until 1936 the members elected the three brothers Sam, Fred and Earnest Aeschliman more or less in rotation. Their other brother, Paul was of course the pastor. From 1936, Wm. B. Classen, Alvin Rubin and Harry Roulet began to appear as trustees, as did Ira Aeschliman, Joseph Stevick, Earl Schluneger and Herb Broweleit from the mid 40's. In the 1960's, Will Aeschliman, John Morgan, Joe Conrad, Richard Largent, Norman Rogers and Leslie Rubin took office, and from the 1970's John E. Aeschliman, Edwin Schluneger and Darrel Claassen were elected. In the 1980's Von Buck, David Morgan, and in the 1990's Marvin Peterson, Bob Vuletich, Tom Conrad and Gary Largent appear as Elders.

In 1944 it was decided to elect deacons to serve alongside the trustees, and one is impressed by the large number of those chosen to this office. Initially Carl Waltner and Irvin Aeschliman were elected then in the 50's Herb Broweleit, Bernard Haack, Rudolf Claassen, Gerhard Dyck, Norman Rogers, Wayne Aeschliman and Harry Roulet were chosen by the congregation. In the 60's Joe Stevick, David Morgan, and Floyd Roulet appear in the list, and in the 70's Philip Largent, Robert Marshall, Wayne Larsen and Mark Rubin filled terms. In the 80's John E. Aeschliman, Melvin Smith, Von Buck and Tom Conrad appear. From January 1, 1983 Deacons and trustees became Elders.

The First Pastor

During those early years, the church continued to grow and develop as the result of the dedicated labors of many. The sections on the Sunday School, the Christian Endeavor and the Women's Missionary Society will deal with this period more in depth. I believe special mention must be made of the lengthened shadow cast by the first pastor, the Rev. P.R. Aeschliman, (Uncle Paul), during forty-three years ministry. As has been mentioned, he preached from the Onecho Pulpit twice a Sunday, once in German and once in English. In addition he usually taught the German Bible class during the Sunday School hour. He was active outside the local church also, being one of the organizers of the Mennonite Pacific District Conference in Pratum Oregon in May of 1886.

He served as president of this conference for six years, and later was an active member of the evangelization committee until his death. He often ministered to the churches of the Pacific District Conference when they were without a pastor or had difficulties and needed advice and guidance or encouragement. He was frequently associated with the establishment of churches and the ordination of ministers. Much of the time he engaged in these activities on the Sundays when the Methodist minister preached at Onecho.

I recall being in a small church in Southern California several years ago when on furlough. I was introduced and given the opportunity to speak briefly about my work, and after the service to greet the congregation at the door. I was approached there by two quite elderly ladies who enquired of me excitedly if I knew "Uncle Paul." They were thrilled to hear that he was actually my great uncle, and that I remembered him quite well. It seemed they had lived most of their lives in a small town somewhere in southern Idaho, and had come to know him when he stopped over at their home from time to time on his travels and opened the Word of God for them. They told me that they had both come to know Jesus Christ as their Saviour through his teaching and testimony.

To me he was the large rather quiet man who spoke from the pulpit and taught the German Bible class. I remember very well one situation in which he taught me a somewhat painful lesson. We children had our Sunday School classes in the basement and returned to the sanctuary for the closing exercises, sitting on the front benches on the right side just in front of the German Bible Class. On one particular morning my cousin Walter and I had our heads down and were either whispering or perhaps giggling about

something during the closing. The first indication we had that we were observed was when two very large work-hardened hands descended over the back of our pew and fixed one on my left ear and the other on Walter's right. We were literally lifted by our ears to a very upright stance. Nothing was said, but then nothing needed to be said. Unfortunately, my father observed what had taken place, and when we got home he and I had a very painful, for me at least, session in the woodshed just to help me remember to pay attention and not talk in church!

Uncle Paul served one term on the Home Mission Board of the Mennonite General Conference which had its headquarters in Newton Kansas, as well as on various committees. I have before me a copy of a newspaper clipping dated April 16, 1933. "About 140 relatives and friends remained after the Easter service Sunday at the Onecho Mennonite church to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Rev. P.R. Aeschliman's ministry there. A lovely banquet dinner was served in the basement of the church. A short program was given consisting of orchestra music played during the dinner hour by Marie and Lawrence Hickman, Leslie Rubin, Irwin Aeschliman and Melvin Ensley; an address in keeping with the occasion by Dwight Ensley; piano solo by Juanita Gerber; male quartet consisting of John and Alvin Rubin, Ira and Lou Aeschliman; greetings from Earl R. Shoupe of Pullman, who is part-time Methodist minister at Onecho; response by the Rev. Aeschliman and a closing orchestra number with vocal accompaniment. Rev. Aeschliman has conducted his work at Onecho continuously for forty years besides doing much outside work. He stated Sunday that he has preached in 16 states and in 225 places, and has also crossed the Rocky Mountains 33 times. His friends all joined in congratulating and wishing him many more years of service."

One must put all this activity in the context that for over 30 years he worked every day as a hired laborer or on his own farm during the week.

Continued Growth

As has been already indicated, the Onecho Mennonite Church began with 24 charter members in 1893. Other than the members present at Sunday School and Christian Endeavor meetings during Uncle Paul's pastorate we have no indication of the condition of the church in terms of numbers. The Minute Books we have on hand commence from December 6, 1936, and at that time 48 votes were cast for the call of the Rev. W. Harley King. In the following years, up to 1972, votes on various matters were a high of 62 and a low of 37. In 1973 the Wednesday night Bible study was attended by 29, which was recorded as 22% of the total Sunday attendance,

which must therefore have been 131. By 1985, the votes on various issues at the annual meeting were into the 60's and in 1990 a total of 76 votes were cast for the annual budget. Truly the Lord kept adding to the Church year after year.

I well recall the coming of the Rev. Harley King. He was much different from Uncle Paul, and we did not quite know how to relate to him. It was whispered about that he "knew Hebrew and Greek" and this was enough to put us all in awe, although I am sure we younger people didn't realize what was involved in "knowing Hebrew and Greek." My father often commented that we had been so spoiled by Uncle Paul that we really didn't know how to care for the new family. We simply were not accustomed to paying a pastor, since Uncle Paul had, to a large degree, supported himself. The minutes record that initially the King family was paid $65. a month. When this was seen to be insufficient, a motion was made in the General Meeting of Dec 6, 1936, that this be increased to $85. a month. However this amount was deemed to be too generous and the motion was defeated. The final decision was to pay them $75., $100. if they moved to town. At that same meeting it was moved and carried that a fund be started for the building of a parsonage.

The Parsonage Erected

A special congregational meeting was called March 29, 1937 for the purpose of considering the building of a parsonage, and all present voted in favor. Apparently Albert Schluneger had donated the ground on which the present building stands, for a vote of thanks was extended to him. A planning and building committee made up of Wm. Claassen, Chairman; Earnest Aeschliman; Lou Aeschliman; Ira Aeschliman, and Will Aeschliman was then elected. The actual erection of the building was accomplished by Arthur Nafziger and Albert Schluneger, assisted by many members of the congregation. The inside fitting was done for the most part by Leslie Rubin.

At the annual business meeting in December of 1937 Leslie Rubin moved that the money left in the Church treasury be added to the parsonage fund. Motion carried. Further action is seen in the December 1938 meeting when a motion was made by Rupert Aeschliman and seconded by Mrs. John Rubin that we finish the upstairs in the parsonage. Motion altered and all agreed to the finishing of one room. A motion was made by Jeanette Rubin and seconded by Earnest Aeschliman that a paper be passed for the purpose of raising some money to reduce the debt on the parsonage. Motion carried.

Apparently the parsonage was completed sometime in 1939 because at the December meeting of that year the building committee was dismissed and it was decided to pay off $500. on the parsonage debt, $400. from the Church treasury and $100. to be raised by voluntary contributions and a special offering in two weeks. However, it was only at the December 1941 annual meeting that Leslie Rubin moved and Carl Waltner seconded that the parsonage debt be paid in full out of the church treasury.

I have not included with these decisions concerning the parsonage made at the Annual Meeting many other discussions and decisions made by the Trustees during the over 5 years until the completion of the project and the retirement of the debt. One of the outstanding characteristics of the Onecho Church from the earliest days has been the democratic method of making decisions in the Annual Business meetings as well as in the monthly Trustees meetings, the Sunday School Board, the Christian Endeavor Council, the Women's Missionary Committee and many smaller sub-committees that were appointed from time to time.

The membership not only had a sense of ownership of but also responsibility for the work, and this is seen again and again as matters are raised, defeated or tabled only to be brought up again and again until finally dealt with. Often motions were made then withdrawn as it was seen that the one making the motion was ahead of or at variance with the will of the majority. Just as often, a motion would be made and seconded then modified, obviously by suggestions from the floor until it more accurately reflected the will of the majority after which it was passed.

Although women were not included on the Board of Trustees it is obvious that they played an important part in the operation of the church. They were active as leaders and members of other committees and boards, and in the Annual Business meetings they spoke more often than did the men, and usually their suggestions and insights were voted into activity. Generally speaking, many different voices were heard in these Annual meetings. However one meeting caught my attention being somewhat atypical in that most of the activity comes from members of the Will Rubin family, rather than from a broad spectrum of the membership. These minutes also illustrate the changing of a motion to reflect the desires of the majority of the group.

"Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting, January 6, 1963"

Chairman, John Morgan, read recommendation of Church Council that plans for new (Sunday School) building be accepted. After a period of discussion, Mark Rubin moved to vote as to whether or not there is a need to build, second by Mrs. Mark Rubin. Darrel Claassen and Oliver Aeschliman

appointed tellers. Result of vote: Yes 46, No 3. The vote indicating the desire of the congregation to build, Bill Rubin moved that we vote on whether or not to accept the basic plans (as drawn up by the architect), motion seconded by Lona Rubin. After discussion, both Bill and Lona withdrew their motion. It was moved by Norman Rogers that we accept the new addition, leaving the old building as it is for the present. Seconded by Bill Rubin. After discussion, Norman and Bill withdrew their motion. Bill Rubin moved to vote on the basic outline (as drawn up by the architect), seconded by Mrs. Mark Rubin.

While the votes were being counted, John opened discussion on sending delegates to PDC at Fresno. Leslie Rubin moved the decision to send delegates be left to the Church Council, motion seconded by Jeanette Rubin. By show of hands, motion carried. Result of vote to accept basic outline plans, Yes 38, No 12. Motion carried. Pearl Rubin moved that we retain the same building committee, seconded by Mark Rubin. Motion carried by show of hands. Vera Rogers moved meeting adjourn, seconded by Bill Rubin. Motion carried. Joe Conrad, Secretary.

Methodist/Mennonite Relationships

The loss of the Trustee and Annual Meeting Minute Books for the first 40 years leaves a great hiatus in our reconstruction of the history the church. Any investigation into events of the early days from the Methodist records is impossible also, for it seems that their books were sent to First Methodist Church of Colfax when the group finally closed out and were destroyed in a fire many years ago. The records of the Sunday School, of the Christian Endeavor and the Women's Missionary Society from that period give no hint as to any tensions or divisions between the two groups. In fact if an observer did not know that this was a Mennonite Church having a resident Mennonite pastor with a significant part of the congregation made up of Methodists, and a monthly Methodist pastor serving from the pulpit, this fact might remain unknown. Growing up in the church, I did not even recognize that this was in any sense unusual. However, I am sure that the good relations that existed must have been the result of deliberate decisions made both by the Mennonite Trustees and the Methodist quarterly meeting. Unfortunately, these deliberations and decisions are not available to us.

There are however, several tantalizing references which we are really unable to decipher. Several times in the late 30's, the Council Minutes record that "Bro. Dwight Ensley opened the meeting with prayer." He was not a member of the Council, but was a leader in the Methodist organization. He

apparently did not take part in the discussions, and one wonders if he was present as an observer. Further, the use of the honorific Bro. was very rare, and limited usually to ministers, so he was seen as present in somewhat of an official capacity. Further, in the Church Council meeting of January 31, 1942 a motion was made by Wm. B. Classen (Chairman) and seconded by Rev. Harley King "that the church council grant permission to our Methodist co-worshipers to use the church edifice for any of their church's services. Motion carried."

A note from the Church Council meeting of June 20, 1955 reads: "After due consideration of the Church Council of the Onecho Mennonite Church it was moved and passed by unanimous vote to accept the resolution and motion adopted at the quarterly session of the Onecho Methodist Church on Sunday, May 22, 1955. It was further moved that the Secretary and Moderator make the proper reply. A copy of the resolution and motion and also the reply by the Onecho Mennonite Church Council is attached." Unfortunately, that attachment no longer exists.

In the Church Council minutes of September 10, 1957 reference is made to a letter received from the Rev. P.D. Unruh who had been pastor since September 1, 1946. At the previous Council meeting it had been decided to extend a call to him to be pastor for another term, and the letter is in response to that call. In it he states that he is willing to consider such a call with two stipulations: First, that his acceptance would require more than the constitutional three-fourth majority vote, and second "Since our Methodist brethren have worshipped with us these many years and since they no longer have a church home, not being members of any church, believing that God has obligated us to them; my acceptance of a call to the pastorate of the Onecho Mennonite Church would be with the understanding that we, the Onecho Mennonite Church would offer them an "Associate Membership" by which we would receive them, not as a group, but as individuals. As Associate Members they would have all the privileges and rights of an active member, with the exception of holding an office in the Church Council or to the pastorate. They in turn would be in full accord with the articles of faith and in Christian love work together with us in the church under the rules and regulations of our Constitution."

From this letter it would appear that the Resolution and motion adopted by the Methodist Church in its quarterly meeting May 25, 1955, which was communicated to the Mennonite Council was to the effect that the Methodist group was disbanding. I have been informed that it was then that the membership records were transferred to the First Methodist Church of Colfax even though few if any of the people actually attended there. This stipulation of Rev.

Unruh thus refers to their need of a church home, and was an offer to accept them as Associate Members. It appears that a constitutional amendment was written to make this possible, for at the annual business meeting of December 1957 an "Amendment Concerning Associate Membership," was read by the secretary, a more than the required three-fourths majority vote in favor was cast, and the Amendment was carried.

Rev. Earl Shoupe

Of the many Methodist pastors who served at Onecho, none was so well known or served for such a long period of time as the Rev. Earl Shoupe of Pullman who came in 1929. At the time he was pastoring in Albion three Sundays a month, and came to Onecho on the fourth. He was a quiet and gentle man, much loved by all. He was somewhat crippled in body, and toward the end of his life was in constant pain from the cancer which finally took him to glory. He did not drive, and Melvin Ensley recalls traveling to Pullman Sunday mornings to bring him to Onecho for the services, after which Ed Ensley would return him home.

The regard in which he was held by the membership at Onecho is illustrated in the surprise 25th wedding anniversary party given for him at the church in 1941. After the morning service we gathered in the basement and he and Mrs. Shoupe were seated in places of honor while representatives of the various organizations of the church spoke words of appreciation. It was planned that 50 Sunday School children would file across in front of him, alternating girls and boys, with each of the girls giving Mrs. Shoupe a flower and each of the boys giving Rev. Shoupe a silver dollar. As I recall, I was the Sunday School treasurer at the time and had obtained the 25 pieces of silver and was waiting in the kitchen to hand them out to the children as they filed into the main room to make the presentation. I found all that silver weighing me down more than a little, so looked for a place I could stash it while the early speeches continued on. Since there were curtains on the windows, I quickly piled the 25 dollars on a window sill out of sight behind the curtain.

I was standing at the doorway observing the events in the main room when someone felt that more ventilation was needed and coming into the kitchen proceeded to open the window. Since it was hinged at the bottom and opened inward my pile of wealth collapsed down onto the concrete floor with a noise that sounded as if the whole building was being razed. I vividly recall leaping across the room with outstretched hands attempting to catch at least <u>some</u> of the coins, but to no avail, and I was reduced to scrambling

around on hands and knees trying to gather them up in time for the presentation.

There is general agreement that the church gave Rev. Shoupe a new black Ford motor car, but it is not certain if it was presented at this time or later. His wife would occasionally drive him to the services, but in later years his son brought him down on his Sunday. No one is sure if he continued on in his capacity until the Methodists closed their membership rolls in 1955, but it is certain that he was much loved and had a strong influence on many.

For myself, he was instrumental in getting me into my first pastorate. I had returned from the service and was commencing my second year at WSC in 1946 when he called me up one Saturday evening and asked me to take the service at the Methodist Church in Palouse the next day, for he was too ill to make the trip. I pled inability, having as yet had no training, but he reminded me that I was preparing to be a foreign missionary, and so I must become accustomed to doing things for which I was unprepared. Further, he informed me that he had heard me lead in the Christian Endeavor and knew that I had taught a Sunday School class at times, and so I certainly could handle a morning message. As I continued to pull back I discovered that his gentle nature hid a strong will, and in the end I had no choice, I went to speak for the one Sunday. The upshot was that I remained for three years until graduation, and I look back upon those years as invaluable preparation for my life work. I will always appreciate his shaming me into doing what I needed to do, and if I have at times been equally insistent in driving my students into accepting challenging opportunities it is because I learned first-hand from the Rev. Shoupe the positive results that flow from stretching ourselves in the Lord's service.

Fellowship with Other Churches

Even though Onecho was somewhat isolated, that did not prevent the church from having fellowship with other groups. I well remember the times we traded meetings with the Baptist Church in Wilcox. We often attended each other's Children's Day or Easter or Christmas programs. I recall with pleasure the wonderful potluck meals under the trees at Wilcox after a Children's Day service in the morning. In those days the Krugers, the Heilsbergs and the Mohrs were mainstays of the Wilcox congregation. Gene Mohr and my father were great friends, having sat in the same school desk at the Odell school years before. I recall that Gene led the Wilcox Choir and my father led the Onecho choir, and after these joint meetings they would ask their counterpart

from the other congregation to lead in the closing hymn which was invariably, "God be With You 'til we Meet Again."

The minutes record the council giving permission to the Onecho pastor to trade pulpits with Colfax Baptist and the Colfax Assembly of God, permission to preach at Dusty and at Albion. It is recorded that Onecho took upon itself the oversight of a new young pastor at Albion and eventually served as an examining and ordaining body for him. I remember as a boy going Sunday afternoons over to Union Center to Saint's Home to attend the tent meetings that were held there in the summer for several years. We were taught loyalty and faithful service to our church, but that did not devalue fellowship with other congregations and denominations.

Onecho and the Mennonite Conferences

We have mentioned that Uncle Paul was one of the founding members of the Pacific District Conference of the Mennonite Church and the minutes record the choosing of delegates to the annual conference of that body year after year. Time was also given for a report-back. Onecho entertained that Conference seven times, in 1901, 1906, 1915, 1928, 1942, 1951 and 1961. Every three or four years the pastor would be given time off to attend the General Conference which was usually held back East somewhere or even in Canada.

These PDC annual conference sessions were wonderful opportunities for fellowship with believers from other towns, chances for young people to get together in social and serving situations, and above all wonderful training opportunities for all of us. The long business sessions were times of learning how to conduct meetings, how to make reports, to make motions, etc. etc. Time was always made for the youth to lead one of the meetings as well as to plan and put on their own evening banquet. I recall one year when the conference was at Onecho that we discovered that we could not have our banquet in the church basement as we had planned. Late in the afternoon we met and decided we would have to use the school house, so we all gathered there to clear out the desks, scrub the floor and dust the inside and arrange and set up tables. Things went well as I remember, and we all learned much from the experience.

A brief note, apparently from the Colfax newspaper dated June, 1934 in the Onecho news is of interest. "The Open Door convention was well attended Sunday with visitors from Monroe, Lind, Schrag, Odessa, Menno and Ruff, Wash., and Albany Ore. The principal speakers were Rev. Galle of Odessa; Rev. Widmer of Albany; Rev. Paul Aeschliman and

Dwight Ensley of this place. The meetings were presided over by Henry Ensley." We know from other sources that the Open Door was an organization of the Mennonite Sunday Schools of the Pacific District Conference.

In the 40's and 50's however, some reservations were being expressed about the direction in which the Mennonite General Conference was moving, and the reflections of this movement in the Pacific District Conference. In their thrust for the practical application of the gospel, the leadership of the Conference at times emphasized the social and political above the spiritual, and members at Onecho became aware of this by word of mouth from those who had contacts in the headquarters of the church and from articles observed in the "Mennonite", the denominational paper. Onecho had always been concerned with the practical aspects of being a Christian, but above and beyond that the church was committed to a clear presentation of the gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, and these new emphases caused considerable concern.

In September of 1961 the matter appeared in the official minutes for the first time when a special congregational business meeting was called "to enlighten the people on some of the things pertaining to the Pacific District Conference procedures and the relation and obligations of the church to the Conference." On November 14 the Council decided to take both the PDC and the General Conference off the Thanksgiving envelopes. Then in January of 1962 the Council decided to meet with Erwin Goering, the Executive Secretary of the General Conference on February 4. It was also decided not to send material to Conference headquarters for the General Conference year book.

At the January 23rd 1962 meeting of the council, several articles from the "Mennonite" were read and discussed. Much of the material was judged to be political rather than spiritual in nature and of questionable content and source. At that same time it was decided to cancel the meeting with Mr. Goering scheduled for February 4, and to delay any recommendation for withdrawal from the General Conference until a pastor was called. However, on March 3 the Council recommended to the congregation that Onecho withdraw from the Pacific District and General Conferences. On March 18 a vote was taken at a congregational meeting. The results were: To withdraw, 40. Against withdrawal, 20. Since the vote did not receive a 75% majority, it did not pass. It was then decided to make up a statement to send to the General Conference. Joe Stevick, Katherine Aeschliman and Vera Rogers were appointed to draw up the letter which was finally sent off in May.

The situation was still far from resolved, for in June a letter containing statements made by Marcus Barth in

lectures at Bethel College, a Mennonite College back east, was read at the Council. No definite action was taken however, for in January of 1963 the Council decided to send representatives to the mid-year conference of the Pacific District Conference at Fresno. Then in the March 2 meeting of the Council, a letter was received from a member urging the Council to take action on withdrawal from the Pacific District Conference. The Council then voted to recommend such withdrawal to a special congregational meeting which was held April 17, 1963. The resolution was to change the Constitution from, "This Church is a member of the Pacific District Conference," to "This Church is unaffiliated." The vote was 44 yes, 9 no.

The final decision had been in the making for over a year and a half, and obviously reflected the convictions of the majority of the members. On May 13 the Council met with Rev. Janzen, president of the Pacific District Conference for a discussion of the church's reasons for the withdrawal, and the final division came on October 9, 1963 when the decision was made for the Women's Missionary Society to withdraw from both the Pacific District Conference and the General Conference. Thus ended 70 years of affiliation.

The church however, was not left without contacts into the outside world. At the annual business meeting of December 1951 the Council recommended that "The First Mennonite Church join as a member of the National Association of Evangelicals, (N.A.E.).) The recommendation was accepted, and membership has been continuous from that time. In later years, pastors were given permission to attend Conferences of the Independent Fundamental Churches of America, (IFCA) and in January of 1972 the decision was made to join the IFCA officially. That affiliation has continued, and in 1983 the IFCA Regional Conference was held at Onecho.

The New Sunday School Building

Although we have little information as to the preparations for and struggles involved in the erection of the first two church buildings at Onecho, we have considerable documentation as to the addition of the Sunday School wing. The first mention of this project was when the December 1958 Annual Congregational meeting directed the Chairman to appoint a committee to investigate possibilities of expanding the church building and report their findings to the Board. It appears that this was not done, for at the first Council meeting in January, 1960 it was moved and seconded that the Chairman appoint a committee to study building expansion, prices and possibilities and report back

to the council at a later date. We have no record of that committee being appointed, but in the December 1960 Annual Congregational meeting it was decided that the church establish a building fund, so some thought of expanding must have been in the air. At the first council meeting in 1961 it was voted to send a letter of thanks to Mrs. Diefenbaugh for the Building Fund donation. The next mention of the building expansion was in July of 1962 when the Sunday School Board met with the Council to discuss their needs for at least 20 classrooms to provide an adequate program for the membership. This request obviously reflects a considerable growth in the numbers attending Onecho.

The Council appointed a building committee made up of Rudy Claassen (chairman), Harry Roulet and Leslie Rubin to begin investigations and oversee the project. Things moved quite rapidly, for on November 10 and 26 the Council met with an architect who presented plans. Then on December 2 the architect presented updated plans to the congregation. At the January 1963 Annual Meeting it was decided to go ahead with the basic plan, with the building committee continuing its work. However, there seems to have been some hesitation since the Council decided to table the matter until obtaining a more detailed cost estimate. However, a Congregational meeting on September voted to go ahead on the building.

In December of that year the council met with the contractor who gave an estimated cost of $65,000, and the matter was tabled for further study. On February 23, 1964 the Congregation voted on building the entire unit: Yes 23, No 16. This having been voted down, the vote was whether to build the Church addition. The vote was Yes 39, No 1. John Morgan, who was chairman of Council at that time is at loss to explain the significance of the two votes, for it seems that the project went ahead to do the entire unit! Sufficient funds were not on hand, for at the Council meeting of June 11, 1964 the Chairman and Treasurer were directed to sign a "Resolution to Borrow" to obtain funds from the bank for the project. By August the Council was making arrangements for the dedication which was held on October 4, 1964.

With the work done on the existing building and the addition of administrative offices and classrooms, this project made possible the increasing growth of the Onecho Church in all phases of its activities in the following years. Actually the project went rather rapidly, with a mere 2 years and 3 months from the first request of the Sunday School Board for 20 classrooms to the dedication of the finished building. Obviously a great deal of work was done by the Building Committee and Council as well as many of the members who took an active share in the project.

The New Sanctuary

The increasing growth and expanded program obviously made the existing sanctuary too small, and in June of 1978 the Council appointed a Facilities Study Committee made up of Von Buck, chairman, Bernie Bruinsma, Verna Broweleit, Darrel Claassen and Ken Julian. In November of 1979 they reported back, and the Council decided to seek the services of architect Larry Broweleit to develop plans to remodel the sanctuary. In June of 1980 it was decided by the congregation to follow the recommendation of the committee to consider the erection of a new sanctuary, and the Council in July re-named the Facilities Study Committee the Building Committee and added Sharon Aeschliman, Tom Conrad, Bruce Ensley, Dick Largent, Josie Largent and Carol Rubin to the membership. In March 1981 the congregation voted to begin the new project which would include the erection of a new sanctuary, re-modelling the nursery and expanding the fellowship room at an estimated cost of $440,000.

The congregation also decided to raise the necessary funds by borrowing from the membership. Phil Largent was appointed Financial Director for the project. The contract was let, and work commenced. One can perhaps identify with the Financial Director when in response to the request of Council for a financial report in July he responded: "Ignorance is bliss, so just as well not have a treasurer's report."

The building was completed and dedicated Thanksgiving Day, 1981 with many friends and visitors present.

Perhaps this is as good a time as any to comment on the tremendous amount of work carried out in the various boards and committees. In going through the old records one is made aware that much of what is required to keep Onecho Church going and growing is done in the background, and many are not even aware of the hours of planning and work contributed. It is not my purpose here to single out an individual as if this were an exceptional case, but as I was working through the Council Minutes it seemed to me that a particular name came up again and again.
I checked back and found that from 1966 through 1968 Leslie Rubin received one job after another. For example:

Jan 1966 Meet with women from Missionary Society to draw up plan to remodel church kitchen.
June 1966 1. Take charge of project to install a combination black- and bulletin-board in Primary room.
2. Put up bulletin-board at top of basement stairs.
Sept 1966 1. With Rudy Claassen investigate prices for painting or installing siding on parsonage

2. With Dick Largent take care of problem with hawks getting down furnace flue.

Dec 1966 1. See to non-working fan in ladies rest room.

2. Tend to toilets in ladies' rest room, water slow in coming in.

3. See that stalls are installed in men's rest room.

4. Take charge of installing aluminum storm door at parsonage.

Feb 1967 Make stand for chest and magazines in entrance.

Sept 1967 Obtain paint for painting bee at parsonage

Mar 1968 Install blackboards in pastor's office and in two rooms at the rear of sanctuary

July 1968 1. Lower hymn racks as agreed on

2. Reported that he had installed a new back door on parsonage, fixed faucets in parsonage, put a bird net on top of church flu, varnished back door on educational wing twice and anchored the playground equipment.

Little items all, but things that had to be done for the church to operate effectively. Many men and women have worked in just this fashion over the past 100 years providing and maintaining the facilities we too often take for granted.

Evangelistic Meetings

One of my earliest recollections of the church year are the regular week-long evangelistic meetings with a visiting speaker who was brought in to preach the gospel. Special music was planned, sometimes there were Sunday School nights or Youth Nights, and I remember these as being quite significant in the life of the church, with altar calls being made nightly and people going forward either to accept Christ as Savior or to rededicate themselves. I myself went forward at such a meeting where Rev. Esau, a blind evangelist preached. I was interested to see in the Council meeting of October 1938 the decision to ask Rev. King to contact Rev. Esau in regards to holding a series of Evangelistic meetings.

The names of some of those contacted to come for such meetings are quite familiar. Rev. Homer Leizy, Rev. Harold Burkholder, Dr. Dan Gilbert, Dr. Talbot, Rev. Epp, Rev. Anisdale, Rev. Frank Harder, and Rev. Wilbert Regier. By 1962 the style of meeting had changed somewhat, for in November of that year it was decided by the Council to contact Rev. McClelland to come in February for a Prophetic Conference. In 1965 the invitation was extended to Raymond

Gingrich of Le Tourneau College to come in February, the theme to be prophecy. In 1967 a Dr Malyon was invited to a Prophetic Conference.

From 1969 the style of meetings seems to have changed again, with the services being referred to as Special Meetings, Spring Meetings, or Bible Meetings. Dean Jongward was invited as were Clyde Narramore, Thomas Cherian, Bill Paulson, and Rev. Arnie Pearson. In October of 1974, since it was too late to schedule fall meetings, it was suggested that members attend First Baptist Church in Colfax where Rev. Finburg was speaking.

Then in 1975 Family Camp was begun, and it seems that from that time this was so successful that it became the fall meetings for the membership as a whole.

Finances

In the beginnings of the church, cash was in very short supply, as could be seen from the fact that article 5 in the Charter specifies that each member must pay at least 50 cents annually into the church funds. We note that later the dues were raised to $2.00 per annum and finally $3.00 per member. That same article specified that the "Genator" (perhaps Pastor) was to receive at least $30.00 annually. Obviously with so small a membership, it was taken for granted that some would give more than the minimum.

With the coming of the Rev. King, the financial problem became acute, since the congregation was accustomed to Uncle Paul earning most of his living outside the church. I well remember that we contributed vegetables, eggs, meat and fruit as we were able to the parsonage, and I am sure that others did so as well, for in those days cash was very scarce. However, regular collections were not taken, expenses being met by the members as they paid in their church dues. I remember Uncle Lou Aeschliman who was treasurer making a small wooden thermometer with a red pencil for the mercury. This was placed by the rear door and was moved by him to indicate the state of finances.

As I recall, the money for missions and benevolent purposes was raised by an annual sale held in the basement of the church to which people brought various articles to be sold by auction. I can remember beautiful hand-made bedspreads and such as well as doughnuts and other articles of food. As time went on, the sale was moved to the school house and finally phased out altogether and people were encouraged to give in the Thanksgiving collection which became the great time of sharing for the whole year.

As I recall, rather than passing collection plates, a chest was placed at the door into which individuals could place their offerings for whatever special need was mentioned. For instance, in the Council minutes of January 11, 1945, "It was decided to place a chest the in vestibule of the church. The money given to be sent to the Lynden Church of Lynden, Washington." This custom has continued to this day. The books were kept by a treasurer chosen from among their number by the Trustees, and an auditing committee of 3 was elected each year to report to the Annual Conference on the correctness of the financial records.

It was decided in 1942 that the envelope system would be used in the Thanksgiving offering, the envelope to contain a card designating all General Conference treasuries. This system proved to be successful and in later years the Council would choose before Thanksgiving just what items would be put on the card in the envelope, thus providing information of the projects for that offering. Money was not always available, and the fact that this is a farming community is seen in the necessity one year of taking a $2,000 loan from the bank to keep bills paid until after harvest. The Board Chairman and Treasurer were appointed to secure the loan.

The level of salaries in those early days can be seen by the decision in February, 1945 to pay the Rev. C.C. Miller $15. for taking the morning service, and the call issued to the Rev. P.D. Unruh included a salary of $150. a month! It is interesting that although decisions were made in both Council and Annual meeting concerning money, no mention was made of a budget until 1958, when the Council spent time preparing to present it to the Annual meeting. The budget was presented and accepted, but the amounts were not listed in the minutes. The first figures we have are for 1961, when the total budget was $9,360. This did not include the $3,720. set aside for the John Lus and Donald Aeschlimans.

Following 1961 the annual budget remained relatively the same, having risen to $10,350. by 1970. However, in the 70's the funds available showed a decided upturn every year, passing $20,000 in 1975 and $44,000 in 1980. By 1985 it was $97,950, and for 1990 it was over $105,000.. These ever-increasing amounts surely reflect a larger membership as well as the effect of inflation and probably an increase in the affluence of the membership of the church.

One is impressed in working through the minutes of the Council and Congregational meetings at the wide variety of projects to which the church contributed and the amounts of those contributions. In May of 1947 a special offering was given to assist migrating Mennonites from Russia get to South America. In June of 1955 it was decided to use the

chest to gather $1. per member to be sent to the Pacific District Conference for the Filer Church in Idaho. "If the one dollar per member is not received, the balance to be paid from the church treasury." The same offering was to be repeated in July for the Fresno Mennonite Church in California.

In March 1959 Rev. Unruh reported on his visit to Rev. Shoup who was very ill. It was decided to take a love offering for him on the 4th Sunday of March, using the chest. At the Annual Meeting of December 5, 1965 it was decided to continue the radio program, 'Onecho Echoes," for another year, at the cost of $60. per month. Pledge cards to be handed out. In 1967 it was decided to allocate the money from the Church Farm as follows:

Jerry Stroup	$1000.
Local CEF	700.
Flying H. Youth Ranch	1000.
McAllister Literature Fund. (S.A.)	300.
ALACCA	1500.
Bagabag Building Fund, Philippines	1000.
Bob Griffin in Philippines	1000.
Montana School of the Bible	500.
Total	$7000.

There was discussion on getting a concrete mixer for Wayne Aeschliman in the Philippines, and it was decided to set out the chest on Sunday Oct 15 for gifts for that purpose. The following were chosen for the Thanksgiving envelopes: Church Building Fund, Church Budget, Grace Bible Institute, Multonomah School of the Bible, Pioneer Gospel Mission. Unfortunately we have no record of the amounts donated in that offering.

Even though the church was exceedingly generous in giving to almost everyone and every project needing assistance, it yet had its own way of doing things. When a representative from Grace Bible Institute wanted to visit members from house to house he was told not to come since "this is not our custom."

I believe we can recognize that the hand of God's blessing on the church was due at least in part to the faithfulness of the people in giving back to Him that with which He had blessed them.

Missions

In discussing the commitment of the Onecho Church to missions both at home and abroad, we are faced with an enormous quantity of material. Truly, from the initial

declaration of the charter members: ". . . And since it is also the desire of such Christian People to help in the spreading of the gospel in Missionary Endeavor here at home and abroad and to help and assist in the general work of the Church. . .", missions have been at the heart of the Onecho program.

Our earliest record book lists mission giving from the year 1902 through 1936, and the variety of projects to which funds were donated is very revealing: for India, for the suffering in Finland, for Home Missions, for the Montana Mission, for Japan, for the suffering in China, for Foreign Missions, for the Salvation Army, for sufferers in Italy, for P.A. Penner (India), for the church building in Aberdeen, Idaho, for Anne Braun, India, for City Missions, for Hospital room (?), for Red Cross, for the church building at Ruff, for Sanitarium, for America (?), for destitute in Switzerland, for Children's Home Society, for the suffering in Russia, for India worker, for the Sunday School Union, for the Refugees and many others. By far the most of the amounts are simply "To Missions." In the earliest days, the amounts were one or two hundred dollars but the amounts continued to build up until they were exceeding a thousand dollars a year in the 1920's.

Women's Missionary Society

From the very early years of the church, a Women's Missionary Society was active in working to meet the needs of missionaries and indigenous people on the field and in keeping the missionary vision alive among the members. It seems their format was basically that of gathering to sew and quilt needed garments and blankets. During the meeting a devotional was presented, special musical numbers might be rendered, and often letters from missionaries were read. An offering was also received, and as the funds collected reached a useful level they were expended on meeting some particular need. We have access to a little notebook containing the very brief minutes of that Women's Missionary Society from July 1931 through December 1940, and we find many interesting and informative facts in it.

For the most part, it seems they met from home to home, but no mention is made of refreshments being served. It was suggested at one meeting that "Missionary News and Notes", not identified, be read aloud by one member while the rest sewed. In December of 1931 it was decided that the ladies would bring scraps of material to the next meeting, the society would purchase cotton batting, one box of sewing thread and two balls of cotton, all of which would be sent to Moen-Copi Mission in Yuba City, Arizona. At the same

meeting it was reported that $1.14 was used to pay postage on 5 quilts sent to the Mission in Montana.

In April of 1932 $20.00 was sent to Mrs. J.G. Regier for Basna, India in place of clothing, and 12 boys' shirts, 22 boys' pants, and Bible pictures were sent to Mrs. E. P. Roth for India. The annual report in June 1931 lists 10 meetings, average attendance of 12. The annual report in June 1932 records that they met 10 times with an average of 8 present. 16 blouses and 8 skirts had been sent to Jangir with $5.00 Christmas gift, 5 quilts to Montana, 5 rolls of bandages to Basna Hospital, $20.00 to Mennonite Missions, $13.00 to cutting committee (?), and $5.00 each to Korba mission and Basna hospital.

Sometimes they became involved in work at Onecho, as in June 1934 when Mrs. Lona Rubin was appointed to take charge of having a hot water tank put into the church kitchen. Then in Feb. 1935 they began a savings account to fit out a Missionary Room in the church. Beginning in June of 1935 they met in the church basement. The annual report of June 1936 lists $87.44 in cash expended in meeting various mission needs. In 1937 they list income of $98.53 from sale of hand work, probably at the Thanksgiving auction in the church basement. In October 1938 they made plans for Thanksgiving Day, including a program and sermon in the morning and the sale, now held in the school, in the afternoon. Then in September of 1939 they decided to omit the Thanksgiving sale and have an offering instead.

Two unique items appear in the record in 1939. They decided to give help to the Wayne Majors for the loss of their home in fire and to contribute $5.00 to Tom Chryst family because their home had also burned. In August 1940 they list articles sent to India with P.W. Penners:

6 flannel bed blankets	31 baby bed blankets
24 baby bed blankets	24 diapers
21 baby dresses	17 rolls of bandages

The final entry in the book records that on December 5, 1930 they met all day at the parsonage to sew for Indian children in Arizona. A pot luck was enjoyed.

I recall as a child that the Women's Missionary Society held regular missionary meetings for the morning worship services. I remember Aunt Phoebe leading the singing, and it seems that we always sang her favorite missionary hymn, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains." I also recall the regular offerings given for the support of a national worker in India by the name of Biola Bey. It would be interesting to research who she was, what her specific ministry was and if she in fact is still living.

During those years some of the workers were: Mrs. Rosa Rubin, Miss. Stella Aeschliman, Mrs. Jeanette Rubin, Mrs. Ida Aeschliman, Mrs. Paul Aeschliman, Mrs. Louise Payne, Mrs. Bertha Allenbach, Mrs. Goldie Aeschliman, Mrs. Lena Rubin, Mrs. Pauline Schragg, Mrs Mayme Aeschliman, Mrs. Lona Rubin, Miss Frances Aeschliman, Mrs. Reinhart, Mother Ensley, Mrs. Lena Rubin, Mrs. Katherine Aeschliman, Mrs. Golda Waltner, Mrs. Wm. Claassen, Mrs. Mary Ensley, Mrs. Esther Aeschliman, Mrs. Laura Aeschliman, Mrs. Emil Schrag, Mrs. Eunice King, Mrs. Hazel Aeschliman, Miss. Blanche Aeschliman, Mrs. Eugenia Schluneger, Mrs. Violet Rubin, Mrs. Lorene (Roulet)?,

From as early as we have records, visiting missionary speakers were a regular fixture at the Church. How well we remember the Penners from India, or "Sunday School" Johnson of the American Sunday School Union. Missions were not seen as something apart from the Church, they were a vital segment of the ministry of Onecho, and I for one see that willingness to go, give and pray as a large part of the reason for God's blessing upon the church for these past one hundred years. In 1954 the Don Aeschliman family went to South Africa with The Evangelical Alliance Mission, the first workers from Onecho. They were followed in 1959 by the Wayne Aeschlimans who went to the Philippines with Wycliffe Translators.

The first recorded Mission Conference was held in 1959, and from that time the minutes record the appointment of a missions secretary, of a missionary committee, the adoption of mission budgets, missionary letters to be sent out, and a constant flow of missionary speakers. Since 1960 over 200 individuals or couples on their way to the field or reporting back have spoken at Onecho once or several times. These workers represent literally dozens of home and foreign mission organizations.

The Church Farm

In 1960 the Onecho Church became holders of what has come to be known as the Church Farm, an event which has had considerable repercussions in the ongoing mission work of the congregation. Gerhard Dyck came to the Palouse hills in 1902 to homestead with his family and joined the Onecho Church. An indication of his dedication to the Lord's work can be seen in his willingness to mortgage his farm in the early 50's to build a chapel on the campus of Grace College of the Bible in Omaha, Nebraska. He also helped support several individual missionary families directly.

When he died of cancer in 1960 at the age of 65 it was found that he had bequeathed to the Onecho Mennonite Church

a farm of 180 acres. The will specified: "It is my desire that said church hold and farm said land, using donation work and labor in so far as possible, and use the proceeds thereof to contribute to such missionary or missionaries as I may be contributing to at the time of my death, including contributions for their retirement, so long as each shall live; and it is my further desire that all income not so used shall be used for such other missionary work as said church may direct."

The church accepted the trust placed upon it, and established the firm policy that not one cent would be spent on church property--the entire income would be used for missionary projects. The men of the church provided their labor and machinery free of charge and even paid the taxes from their own pockets. In the early days of farming the church land, it fell to a few of the men to do the work and keep the interest going, but God honored their faithfulness, and now in later years there is involvement of a large percentage of the farmers. As of this date, over $500,000.00 has been given to God's work around the world. At the time of the transfer of the land to the church, it would have been worth about $40,000. if sold!

It should be pointed out that the income from the Church Farm did not replace individual and corporate giving to missionaries and mission organizations. Increasing amounts were budgeted over the years for the support of many individuals and diverse projects. In 1983 a missions budget of $41,700 was accepted by the congregation, and during that year the missionary conference offering totaled $2,872.43. In 1965 Faith Promise cards were used for the first time, and the names listed were, the John Lus, Tom Lymans, Wayne Aeschlimans, Donald Aeschlimans, Robert Archers, Anton Netlands, Wesley Van Nattens and the Keith Frews. Two years later these same names appeared on the missionary letter mailing list with the addition of, the Karl Nothelfers, Stan Dudgens, Earl McAllisters, Jerry Stroups, Jack Hendersons, Earl Roths and the Bob Griffens.

In the early 1970s the church began to support campus groups at WSU and the U of I in addition to Child Evangelism Fellowship, and this concern for local work is seen in the decision later to support the Open Door ministry in the Universities and the Whitman County Chaplain. In 1974 a further step in mission involvement was made when Onecho agreed to register as the Sending Body for the Cape Evangelical Bible Institute, issuing tax-deductible receipts for all funds received, and handling the support of the workers there. This arrangement continued until the early 90's with the retirement of the Donald Aeschlimans from the field.

In the past ten years the giving to missions, apart from the Church Farm, has generally declined if seen as a

percentage of the total budget. In 1983 the missions budget was 32% of the total budget, or $41,700 for missions over against $89,620 for the general budget. The percentage increased year by year until 1987 when it was 37% but since then has declined to 26% in 1992 and 27% in 1993. The great increase in the general budget has been required by the expanded program of the Church, but it should be a matter of some concern that the missions budget has not increased in a comparable manner.

The broad spectrum of missions supported can be seen in the 1993 budget.

Campus Crusade	WSU/Idaho
	Christie Turnbull
Far East Gospel Crusade	Mike Adams
Gospel Missionary Union	Martin Windle
Navigators	Cindy Christenson
	Ann Elfers
	Gary Glenny
	Mike Kotecki
	Jim Mock
OC International	Jim Kemp
Onecho Bible Church	Don & Eva Aeschliman
Open Door	
SEND	David Loewen
TEAM	Robert Archer
	Mrs. Notehelfer
Whitman County Chaplaincy	Ben Benthien
Wycliffe	Wayne Aeschiman
	Nate Kugler
	Tom Lyman
	Doug White

Christian Endeavor

In July, 1913, 20 years after founding of the church, it was decided to start a Christian Endeavor Society. Although the younger generation might not be familiar with this organization, it had a tremendous impact on the church in the early 1900's. It was both international and interdenominational. It provided opportunities for study of the Scripture as it shed light on and gave direction in facing issues of Christian living. Further, and perhaps as important, it provided young people with the training in preparation and presentation of a lesson first before one's peers in a small group, and later in a much larger context. It was the place where most of the workers of the church of the early 20th Century received their training in the skills of leadership, and with its total commitment to the Bible as the one rule of faith and practice it provided a bulwark against the spread of Liberalism and Humanism in the

churches and denominations that availed themselves of its program.

The pattern of meetings was quite simple. A lesson book specifying a subject for every Sunday of the year was obtained from headquarters. Topics were provided which involved searching out the Scriptural direction and solutions to the subject being discussed. As I recall, the program committee chose the leaders for six months or a year in advance, then each leader was responsible for handing out the topics ahead of time, ideally a week before but usually at church on the day the topic was to be discussed. Then at the meeting, ordinarily on Sunday evening, the leader would introduce the subject after the opening song service, after which each of those with a topic would stand and present either what the text had to say or better, from their own experience or study. Opportunity was then given for discussion. Sometimes there was no response, but at times when subjects "hit a nerve" the discussions could become quite interesting. In retrospect, the Christian Endeavor differed from present-day youth programs in that everything was done by the members themselves. Usually some adults, including the pastor, were present, but we the youth ran the organization, did whatever preparation was required and made the presentations. As I recall, no social functions as such were included or, in any event, only rarely. The opportunity to get together seemed to meet our social needs adequately.

Organizationally, Christian Endeavor had several committees providing training in various aspects of administration. In addition, there were district organizations, state organizations as well as regional and national conferences. As a young person advanced up the ladder, opportunity was thus given not only in public speaking and teaching but also in organization and administration. It crossed completely over denominational lines, providing chances to meet and fellowship with young people from many other groups. As I recall, it could be denominational in nature, with the Mennonite Youth Groups of the Pacific District Conference being known as Christian Endeavor

All those joining the Christian Endeavor signed the Active Members Pledge. I recall saying this pledge at the opening of meetings, although I cannot remember if it was part of every meeting. We did use it often enough that I find I am almost able to say it off by heart. "Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for strength, I promise Him that I will strive to do whatever he would have me do. I will make it the rule of my life to pray and read the Bible, to support the work and worship of my church, and to take my part in the meetings and other activities of this society.

"I will seek to bring others to Christ, to give as I can for the spread of the Kingdom, to advance my country's welfare, and promote the Christian brotherhood of man. These things I will do unless hindered by conscientious reasons, and in them all I will seek my Savior's guidance."

At that first organizational meeting in 1913 the following officers were elected:

Milton Ensley,	President
Wm. H. Rubin	Vice President
Beulah Aeschliman	Recording Secretary
John Rubin	Treasurer
Florence Stine	Corresponding Secretary

Officers elected were empowered to choose the various committee members as they saw fit, and made the following appointments:

Prayer Meeting Committee
Philip Ensley, Fanny Stine, Milton Ensley

Lookout Committee
Florence Stine, Emma Rubin, Merle Ensley, Wm. H. Rubin, Beulah Aeschliman, John Rubin.

It was decided that dues would be ten cents a month per member, and at the meeting of December 28 the following sixteen people paid their dues for that month: Milton Ensley, Merle Ensley, John Rubin, Beulah Aeschliman, August Allenbach, John Aeschliman, Ira Aeschliman, Phil Ensley, Will H. Rubin, Alvin Rubin, Emma Rubin, Sam Aeschliman, Florence Stine, Cecil Johnson, Rupert Aeschliman and Fanny Stine. At the next meeting on January 7, 1914 it was decided that dues be reduced to five cents a month!

There is no record of meetings held until June 23, 1914 when new officers were elected and new committees chosen. It was decided that the devotional meetings adjourn from July 19 to October 4. This decision is followed by two blank pages in the record book, so it seems that the society did not recommence after the summer break.

Following the blank pages, on March 7, 1920 it was determined to re-organize Christian Endeavor, and officers were elected as follows:

President	Bertha Ummel
Vice President	Leslie Rubin
Sec. & Treas.	William Aeschliman
Assist.	John Rubin
Chorister	Ira Aeschliman
Organists	Emma Rubin and Goldie Aeschliman

The Executive Committee met on March 9 and appointed the following committees:

Prayer Meeting Committee
John Rubin, Sam R. Aeschliman, Bertha Ummel

Missionary Committee
Dwight Ensley, Rev. Paul Aeschliman, Mrs. Arthur Ensley

Lookout Committee
Emma Rubin, Harry Roulet, William Aeschliman

Music Committee
Ira Aeschliman, Pearl Rubin, Lou Aeschliman

Social Committee
Leslie Rubin, Mrs. Ira Aeschliman, Verna Watson

Flower Committee
Golda Aeschliman, Mrs. Phoebe Aeschliman, Lydia Schluneger, Martha Aeschliman and Alice Winn.

Following this listing were the names of 64 charter members. The first devotional meeting was March 14, 1920. At this meeting the chairman gave a brief history of the Christian Endeavor organization and work. Bertha Ummel led in the first topic which was "Patience and its Rewards" The Scripture was 1 Cor 13:4-7. The meeting closed by repeating the Christian Endeavor Benediction in concert, "May the Lord watch between me and thee, while we are absent one from the other." The statistics for the meeting were:

Number taking part	19
Officers present	7
Others present	35
Total Attendance	42

Complete records were kept of every meeting, including leader, subject, hymns and final statistics. These statistics were then averaged for the report at the semi-annual business meetings at which time officers were elected and committee members chosen for the next six months. This turn-over of workers was a deliberate way of providing the most opportunities for the most people.

A survey of the subjects discussed at meetings in the first six months of 1920 indicates their breadth:

"Patience and its Rewards"
"Our Country's need of Christ"
"What shall we do with our Sunday"
"When Courage is needed"
"Christian Principles in Personal and Public Health"
"How to show Sympathy"

"Cultivating High Ideals"
"Religion Pays"
"Will a man rob God"
"Being a good Comrade"
"What Bible Reading will do for you"
"Common Mistakes in Daily Living"
"Honesty in Word and Deed"
"Living up to our Responsibilities"
"Our Duty to our Country"
"Christian Brotherhood among Races and Nations"
"Every Christian a Missionary" (Missionary emphasis)
"A Saloonless World and How to get it" (Temperance emphasis)

I believe the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of Sept 19, 1920 will be of interest in seeing how the Society operated on the administrative level.

"The Executive committee held its regular meeting Sept. 19, 1920, and the following reports were given by committee chairmen.

Prayer meeting Committee has appointed a leader for every meeting in this year, and in case of absence of any leader has appointed a substitute. Also tried to do what it could to make the meetings interesting.

Lookout Committee. 23 new members were taken into the society in the past six months, also clippings were handed out every Sunday.

The Missionary Committee planned and carried out two missionary programs. A missionary offering was taken at each meeting. Total collected, $23.50. By vote of the society this offering was sent to the "Washington Children's Home Society" for aid of homeless children.

The Social Committee reports many were welcomed to the meetings and invited back. A lawn social was also given in June and a short program was arranged for the occasion.

The Music committee has selected songs appropriate for the topic of the evening also arranged special selections of quartets and duets.

The Floral Committee reports 33 bouquets given to sick folks.

The average number taking part for the last six months was 19, and the average attendance was 52."

The Missionary meetings were held regularly and considerable effort was expended to make them interesting and memorable. On one such occasion, Mrs. Gilbert, mother

of Jeanette Rubin and Katherine Aeschliman spoke on her life in China. At times, in order to vary the format, debates would be scheduled. One such took place on January 23, 1921. The question was: "Resolved that America needs missions more than Asia." The participants:

Affirmative, Milton Ensley and Alvin Rubin

Negative, John Rubin and Lou Aeschliman

Decision of the Judges: Affirmative 13, Negative 11

Another debate on November of that year was on the question: "Resolved that it is America's duty to welcome immigrants in order that the world might be evangelized sooner." The participants:

Affirmative, Harry Roulet and Dwight Ensley

Negative, Leslie Rubin and Beulah Aeschliman

No judges decision was registered.

The offerings taken at these special Missionary meetings were expended on various projects. Perhaps the most regular recipient was the "Washington Children's Home Society" of Spokane. Others receiving funds were The Salvation Army of Colfax(!), a mission station in India, Russian relief, and the starving children in Africa.

The other committees also worked to provide special events to make the meetings more attractive. On March 27, 1921, the Christian Endeavor Choir presented the Cantata, "Our Living Lord." On September 25 of that year the meeting was held at the Poor Farm in Colfax "for the benefit of the inmates," and on December 18 it was decided to take food to the people there. On April 29, 1923 the band had charge of the music for the service , and the band also played after the meeting held at the home of Lou Aeschliman on August 21, 1924 while the fires were being lit for the "Veiners Roast". Special music was often a part of the meetings, with Male Quartettes, Mixed Quartettes, Double Quartettes, Solos, Duets, and Instrumental Solos. Other outdoor meetings were held at the Earnest Aeschliman and Al Schluneger homes. On December 27, 1925 the meeting was held at the Almota school house, and following the regular service a Christmas pageant was presented by the Almota people.

During these years, regular references were made to the appointment of delegates to the Christian Endeavor conferences and conventions, and the reports back from those who had attended. Places where these were held included Ruff, Garfield, Moscow, Pullman, Walla Walla and the International C.E. Convention in Portland, Oregon. The

final meeting reported in the second minute book was held on June 29, 1930 with 46 people present. The final page of that book lists the 46 members enrolled in 1929. Of that number 18 were Aeschlimans, 11 were Ensleys and 7 were Rubins, indicating that the original families were still active in the work. The following record books are not available, but from as long as I personally remember the Christian Endeavor was an integral part of Onecho Church life.

No comparable record is available for the youth work of these later years. However, Onecho has ever been aware of the need of educating and training its young people, and this was underlined by calling Mark and Donna Armstrong to be full-time youth pastors in November 1980. Under their dedicated leadership the work grew, and their departure in 1985 left the church searching for a replacement. In February of 1987 Gary and Lisa Largent took up the work on a half-time basis, remaining in that capacity until Darrel and Loretta Fortune were taken on staff as youth workers in March 1991. After their departure in October of that same year Tim and Tricia Peterson took over the youth program on a part time basis, a ministry they continue to the present.

The Library

One of the earliest records we have of the Onecho Church is to be found in a small journal listing the books in the church library and recording the individuals who checked them out. The book commences from 1901, this presumably being the date in which record-keeping began, and carries on through 1911.

The books listed are English, numbering 162 and German, numbering 52. While the names of the English books are given in full, a few with authors, the German books are listed simply by consecutive numbers, suggesting that the individual keeping the book may not have known the German language.

One is struck immediately by the wide diversity of the books listed. Sample titles are: Susy's Flowers, William Tell, Black Beauty, The Atheist Shoemaker, Life and sermons of Moody, Confessions of an English Opium Eater, Young People's History of Germany, Imitation of Christ, The Christian Secret of a Happy Life, John Plowman's Pictures, John Plowman's Talks, The Holy War, Ben Hur, Story of my Life, by Helen Keller, A Child's Life of Christ, Last Days of Pompeii, Pilgrim's Progress, Life of Luther, Vol. I, The Virginian, Ten Nights in a Barroom!

It would appear that these books were not purchased deliberately to be placed in the library, but were rather donated by members. Obviously those in the church had catholic tastes as well as a willingness to share, for one can imagine that books were scarce on the frontier, and would be prized possessions in any family home. The fact that many were not specifically Christian indicates that those who developed the library saw it as reflecting life in general, or perhaps they were willing to accept any book not obviously anti-Christian in order to provide more opportunities for reading.

In the ten years covered by the records, 43 people checked out books, making an average of 22 for each individual. However 21, or approximately half of the people checked out less than 10. Those taking out the most were as follows: Fred Aeschliman, 157; Louis Allenbach, 107; Edward Rubin, 89; William Rubin, 71; and Rev. Paul Aeschliman, 56. These individuals read both German and English. Henry Ensley, 40, and Lou Roulet, 40, checked out only English books. I recall my father Ira telling me that my grandfather Fred had learned the Low German in his home in Neuchatel, Switzerland, had learned French in school in France, and had taught himself to speak, read and write English after coming to the States. Obviously he practiced his reading by making full use of the library.

Apparently there was some change in keeping the records, for the book has no entries after 1911, even though there is plenty of vacant space remaining. However, the library was continued, for one of my early memories is sitting on the floor in the room where the books were kept and reading them when some other church activity was not too interesting. For something like the past thirty years the library has been the responsibility of Mrs. Katherine Aeschliman, assisted in recent years by Mrs. Leona Conrad. It consists at the present time of more than 2000 volumes which are carefully catalogued, and is located in a very open and convenient room between the church office and the foyer. It is still made up largely of books that have been donated as well as volumes purchased specifically for the library.

The Sunday School

The work at Onecho has always included the Sunday School ministry. In Dwight Ensley's "History of Colfax Mennonite Church" already referred to, he says: "The Sunday School which has had a long period of holding forth the light of life continues as a union society. Various individuals have served as Superintendent some for many terms, Sam R. Aeschliman perhaps serving for the longest

period." From other sources we are informed that "S.R. had, with a few others organized a small Sunday School. He had always filled a position, or even two or three. He was very seldom absent, and was late only twice in 40 years, and this for a very few minutes." We are faced with a dearth of direct information about the Sunday School during those early days with the exception of one record book which covers the period July 23 1911 through May 30, 1915.

In this 200 page book, in which each page is given over to the record of one Sunday program, we are immediately impressed by the careful and complete records kept. A typical page is reproduced here.

Feb. 22, 1914
S.S. opened by singing Song No. 25.
Prayer offered by the Supt.
Song No. 37
Repeating of the Gem Verses by the School.
Song No. 27.
Reading of the lesson in concert followed by singing Song No. 10
Class study of the lesson as found in Luke, 12 chapt. from 1-12 Verses.
Title: Faith Destroying Fear
Golden Text: Everyone one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God.
Review of the lesson taught by Supt.
Officers and Teachers all present except teacher of Intermediate Class.

Teachers Roll Call

English Infant	7
German Infant	7
Beginners	9
Intermediate	6
Young Peoples	19
English Bible	13
German Bible	8
Teachers	7
Total Att.	77

B.O. rec'd. .15 c
After singing song No. 153, S.S. was dismissed by Sis. Mrs. M. (Mary) Ensley.

Esther Allenbach, Sec'y

This exact form was followed year after year, and in the event of the secretary being absent it was reproduced with only the names and numbers absent for the acting secretary to fill in. On at least two occasions, that person did not do the job, and we have the form but not the statistics! In addition to Esther Allenbach, Frances Stine, Beulah Aeschliman and Nannie Allenbach acted as secretaries during the years covered by the record book.

One is surprised at this period by the fact that there was a class specifically for German infants. Apparently all the other classes, except the German Bible Class, were taught in English. It may have been that the infants' class was basically a nursery, and since these children were living in German-speaking homes they needed a German-speaking teacher. During the years covered in this book, Mrs. Phoebe Aeschliman taught this particular group, and the Rev. Paul Aeschliman taught the German Bible Class. During the years I remember, probably in the later 20's and early 30's Uncle Paul was still teaching that particular class, and later I can recall Elda Schluneger teaching it.

For the most part, names are not mentioned in the weekly records, except for those, other than the Superintendent, who might open or close in prayer or review the lesson. We are dependent upon the records of particular situations to see who was active in the School. For instance, on November 19, 1911, it was decided to celebrate Christmas, and the following appointments were made:

Program: Emma & Wm. Rubin, Florence Stine, Puma Tompkins and Beulah Aeschliman.
Decoration. Lillie Allenbach, Erma Armstrong and Frances Stine.
Chorister: Louis Aeschliman with his assistants.
Mrs. Allenbach and Mrs. Paul Aeschliman were appointed
to select the presents.

On December 31 of 1911 the officers for the following year were chosen as follows:

Superintendent:		Dwight Ensley
Asst.		Ernest Aeschliman
Sec.		Beulah Aeschliman
Asst.		Fanny Stine
Treas.		Wm. Rubin Jr.
Organists		John Rubin, Sam Aeschliman, Florence Stine, Emma Rubin and Beulah Aeschliman
Chorister		John Rubin
Asst.		Louis Aeschliman
Librarian		Florence Stine
Asst.		Wm. Aeschliman
Teacher	Eng. Inf	Mrs. Wm. Rubin
	Ger. Inf	Mrs. Phoebe Aeschliman
	Beginners	Phil Ensley
	Intermediate	Earnest Aeschliman
	Young P.	Sam R. Aeschliman
	Eng. Bible	Mrs. J.P. Stine
	Ger. Bible	Rev. Paul Aeschliman

In November of 1912 the following were chosen to prepare for the Christmas program:

Program	Anna Stimson, Florence Stine, Elmer Sommers and Beulah Aeschliman
Decorations	Irma Armstrong, Fanny Stine, Lila Allenbach, and Mabel Banning
Presents	Sis. Fred Aeschliman and Sis. Slonaker
Tree	Albert Schluneger and Ed Stevick

In January of 1913 the officers were chosen for the new year as follows:

Superintendent	Arthur Ensley
Asst. Supt.	Dwight Ensley
Secretary	Fanny Stine
Asst. Secty.	Ira Aeschliman
Treasurer	William Rubin
Librarian	Ira Aeschliman
Chorister	John Rubin
Asst. Chorister	Luis Aeschliman
Organists	Beulah Aeschliman, Sam Aeschliman, and Emma Rubin.

The only change in the teachers was that William Rubin was chosen to teach the Intermediate class replacing Earnest Aeschliman.

The lesson taught was apparently the same for all classes, as were the Golden Texts which were recited "in concert." We note that there was a regular temperance lesson as well as a regular missions emphasis in the lesson. It is interesting that the superintendent or someone appointed by him would review the lesson after the regular teaching hour in the class. In his absence this might be done by his assistant, or by someone chosen by him. We note that Mrs. Mary Ensley was called on several times during these years. Also, the Rev. Paul Aeschliman or another visiting pastor might be given the responsibility of reviewing the lesson.

A study of the records reveals a very consistent attendance on the whole. The average for the 5 years is 65, including officers, teachers and students, with little variation in spite of the unimproved roads and uncertain transportation. Weather had <u>some</u> effect on the numbers, for instance On November 3, 1912, 22 were present but the next Sunday the 10th, 71 were there. On December 15, 21 made it, while on the 22nd there were 72. One stormy day apparently did not dissuade them from coming the next week. That must have been a severe winter, for January 12, 1913 there was no Sunday School "on account of bad weather," and the next Sunday the 19th the "officers and teachers were all absent

except the superintendent and two teachers." The total attendance for that day was a mere 12!

The records indicate that these were not easy times financially. An offering was given the first Sunday of every month and this averaged $4.40 over the five years. It appears that most of this money went to pay for the Sunday School materials which cost over $20. every six months. In addition to the regular offering in July of 1914 an additional offering of $5.08 was taken and given to Bro. Bernhardt, no explanation of who he was or why the offering was made. Every year a Christmas collection was taken early in December, usually amounting to about $20.00, and it appears this was for the presents for the children. On December 22, 1912 the secretary reported on the funds spent for Christmas decorations as follows:

24 yards of tinsel	$1.20
1 bell	.15
12 holders (?)	.10
4 ornaments	.35
1 stocking	.10
2 balls	.30
2 ornaments	.25
2 ornaments	.35
Total	$2.80

Although this seems little enough by present-day standards, it put the treasury in debt for the next quarter! Almost every Sunday there was a small amount given for birthday offerings, and this appears to have gone to meet the over-all financial needs of the School.

However, lest we presume that in these difficult times they skimped on the children there are indications that they often went what would be considered the second mile even in our more affluent times. In going through my late father's things, I found two little Christmas booklets given him by his Sunday School teachers. The first is a quite simple one of four pages, tied with a green ribbon with a Christmas scene on the front. There is an inscription inside, "May this Christmas Day be one of joy for you and yours, with the written notation, "From your S.S. teacher, L.F. Aeschliman". He was Dad's brother. The second is a more elaborate booklet of six pages, tied with gold string having a beautifully embossed cover with a raised picture of Mary and the Baby Jesus. The first page is a semi-transparent paper with the date, 1907, and two Christmas messages printed on it. The second page, also printed, is somewhat as follows:

ONECHA
Sunday School

Class No. 3
Colfax, Washington

MRS. AMOS GERBER, Teacher
Samuel Aeschliman Supt.
Rev. Paul Aeschliman, Rev. Bartlett
Pastors

Class

Ira Aeschliman	Fred Slonecker
Earnest Slonecker	Elton Maura
Norma Warren	Clara Allenbah
Lily Allenbah	Beulah Aeschliman
Bertha Rubin	Louisa Rubin
Fannie Stine	Edith Warren
Asa Warren	Ruby Jenkins
Carl Jorgenson	Eugene Chamberlain

Erma Armstrong

The remainder of the booklet is printed with Bible verses, Christmas poems and Christmas scenes. Obviously the entire pamphlet was professionally made up, with the first page printed to order, but even doing that for 15 students must have been quite costly. It certainly made a beautiful Christmas greeting, and its significance to my father is seen in the fact that even as a thirteen-year old he kept it safe, only to be found after 86 years!

The inclusion of the names of the two pastors is indicative of their role in the Sunday School. Almost every Sunday Uncle Paul appears somewhere on the program, either leading in prayer or at times reviewing the lesson. About one Sunday a month, most likely the Sunday at which the Methodist minister brought the message in the morning service, that person's name appears on the program. Beginning with July 1911 these are Rev. Mountain, Rev. Smith, Rev. De Weese, Rev. Bontrager, Rev. King, Rev. Petter, Rev. Gibson, Sister Armond, Rev. M. Anderson and Rev. Armond. It is possible that the Rev. King was the father of Rev. W. Harley King who became the second pastor of the church in the thirties.

Certainly the emphasis placed by these early members upon the training of their children in the Holy Scriptures had much to do with the solid growth of the work, and with the continuing dedication to Scriptural principles on the part of the Onecho Church in subsequent years. The spirit of sacrifice that breathes through the record of these early years is one that should be present in every community that takes the commands of God's word as normative.

We can take encouragement in the present as we recognize that same spirit of sacrifice and dedication driving the erection of the Sunday School wing. This was truly a massive undertaking for a relatively small group, and in fact some counseled that if it were attempted the membership would never be able to pay it off. However, it is difficult to imagine carrying on the work without these well-planned and eminently useful facilities, and the fact that the challenge was accepted can provide a historical precedent for the next one hundred years in attempting great things for God.

The Pastors at Onecho

One feature in the history of the Onecho Church that becomes very obvious from a study of the various sources is that the group over the hundred years of its existence has been for the most part oriented toward and controlled by the lay members rather than by the pastors. Even during the very extended pastorate of Uncle Paul, decisions were made and projects carried out by the members. Of course the pastor has always played an important part through the teaching and preaching ministry, through counselling, and through sharing a vision for the Lord's work that will both inspire and direct the members in the pew. While we would not wish to minimize that part, one is left with the distinct impression that the membership as a whole has directed and carried on the work.

At this point we list the eight pastors who have ministered to Onecho, not only to record their years of service but also to give some brief facts as to their families and type of ministry.

1. Rev. Paul Aeschliman 1893-1936

Since we have already covered his pastorate at length we simply add that he and Aunt Phoebe adopted two children, Beulah and Rupert. Rupert's daughter Donna Morgan and her children and grandchildren are involved in the work at Onecho to this day.

2. Rev. W. Harley King 1936-1946

Rev. King, his wife Eunice and daughter Ethella came to Onecho from an urban life in the East. It was a very new experience for them to move into a rural setting, but they made the shift and soon became a part of the country life. They initially lived in a small house on the Arthur Ensley land where Lona Rubin grew up, remaining there until the parsonage was erected. As has been mentioned, he had been seminary trained, and brought a high degree of scholarship to the pulpit.

3. Rev. P.D. Unruh 1946-1961

Rev. and Mrs. Unruh and their nine children, four boys and five girls, came to Onecho from the Spring Valley Mennonite Church in Newport, Washington. The Unruhs were a great help in the youth group, and we remember well getting together at the parsonage with the large family. Although he had not received a great deal of formal theological training, Rev. Unruh had studied much on his own, and was well-known as a teacher of the Bible. His sermons were practical and down-to-earth.

4. Rev. Charles Lyman 1962-1971

Rev. Lyman and his wife Marge and three sons and two daughters came from Derringer, Washington. He was the pastor in the difficult years when the church was breaking its ties with the Mennonite Conferences and becoming an Independent Church. His wife was a great help to the work with her musical talents, so willingly shared. He initiated weekly services at the Nursing Home as well as a weekly radio program on the local station. Through his contacts at Washington State University a number of workers from both Campus Crusade and the Navigators became active at Onecho. The Lymans returned to Colfax to retire in 1985, but were invited to assist in the work at Onecho with the departure of Mark Armstrong, Youth Pastor in that year. Rev. Lyman served as interim pastor after the departure of David Zimmerman until the coming of Rev. Jeff Grant at which time he became Assistant Pastor, a post which he holds at this time. The Sunday School wing was erected and dedicated during the early years of his pastorate.

5. Rev. Garland Shinn 1971-1975

Rev. Shinn and his wife Roberta and their two sons and two daughters came to Onecho from a Church-planting ministry in southern Oregon. During his rather brief tenure here he specialized in contacts outside the community, starting a work in Wawawai, carrying on DVBS and Bible Clubs, and visiting with families who before had not been members of the fellowship. He brought a strong emphasis on "Family" into the church, and it was during his time at Onecho that the first Family Camp, which has become such a strong tradition was organized. They left Onecho to go into the same type of Church-planting work in Nevada.

6. Rev. Roderick Pence 1975-1979

Rev. Pence and his wife Barbara came to Onecho from the coast. They had served as missionaries in Korea, and during that time had adopted four Korean children, two girls and two boys. Rev. Pence's great strength was in personal counseling, and members comment on his ministry in that area. He left Onecho with his family to become Administrator of Montana Institute of the Bible.

7. Rev. David Zimmerman 1979-1988

Rev. Zimmerman and his wife Helen and one of their four children came from Oregon where he was engaged in secular work, having been out of the pastorate for a time. Where Rod Pence had been most at home in a one-on-one relationship, Dave Zimmerman is remembered more as a fine preacher of the Word. The new sanctuary was planned and erected during the first years of his ministry at Onecho. It was also during his time that the church expanded its pastoral staff with the calling of Mark Armstrong as Youth Pastor. Mark stayed from 1980 through 1985.

8. Dr. Jeffrey Grant 1989-

Rev. Grant and his wife Billie Jean and Jeannie, the youngest of their four daughters came from a pastorate on the Washington coast. They had been missionaries in Japan prior to that pastorate. Pastor Jeff has brought to the church a wealth of administrative skills as well as a strong pulpit ministry. It is the hope of the congregation that he and Billie Jean will fill a long and fruitful pastorate here, if not as long as Uncle Paul's 44 years then at least as long as P.D. Unruh's 15.

Leadership Training

One of the functions of the church anywhere is to develop its members to their potential as they serve the Lord by ministering to his people. That this has been done at Onecho is clearly seen as we take the long view of the history of the church through the study of the history over the past 100 years.

We usually come upon the names of young people first when they are appointed as tellers at the congregational meetings. Soon after this introduction, we find them seconding routine motions, such as to accept the minutes as read or to adjourn. With the passage of time they are nominated to be ushers or parking lot attendants and usually the first time their names appear on the ballot they are not chosen. However, after two or three nominations they are entrusted with these positions.

Later on they speak out in the congregational meetings, are placed on committees, make motions, are chosen to nominate candidates for the next election, or they make nominations from the floor. Then with the passage of time they are elected or appointed to other positions of leadership involving greater responsibility. As they contribute their efforts and insights and show their consistency in service, they are given even more difficult roles to fill.

Finally, as they advance in years, these places of leadership are given over to younger men and women who have followed in their footsteps, learning from their words and works. But their names continue to be found in the records in their declining years as they share their wisdom and insights in committee and congregational meetings and continue to serve in areas where they have proven their dependability and expertise.

In Conclusion

We dare not conclude this brief overview of the 100 year history of the Onecho Church without some vital statistics. During this past year, 9 babies were born to members, and 4 child dedications were held. Three members passed away; Dwayne M. Gering, Ira Paul Aeschliman and Irvin S. Aeschliman, and two new members were received. The active membership roll lists 146 members and 22 non-resident members of whom 8 are missionaries.

A list of the various committees for 1993 puts into focus the many individuals involved in carrying on the program at Onecho Church. This listing does not include the names of the ten Sunday School teachers.

Council Marvin Peterson-Chairman, Tom Conrad-Treasurer, Gary Largent-Secretary, Von Buck, David Morgan, Bob Vuletich

Property and Finance David Morgan-Chairman, Von Buck, Mike Nafziger, Greg Nolan, Brian Largent, Ron Peterson, Jon Webber, Jim Heilsburg

Membership Dick Largent-Chairman, Rosie Schluneger, LaRae Claassen, John Aeschliman, Bob Vuletich

Christian Education Alan Morgan-Chairman, Randy Stueckle, Terri Vuletich, Rosemarie Aeschliman, MaryAnn Largent, Lisa Largent, Debbie Largent, Pastor Charles

Missions and Outreach Gary Largent-Chairman, Doug Stueckle, Jeanette Rubin, Judy Buck, Kirk Hartman, Charles and Nola Coston, Blake Buri, Darrel Claassen

Music and Worship Bob Stueckle-Chairman, Ed Schluneger, Cory Aeschliman, Angie Webber, David Buri, Cathy Morgan, Tom Conrad, Cheryl Stueckle

Thus the church is enabled to serve and to expand its ministry by the efforts and activities of dedicated men and women, and these same men and women grow in direct proportion to their faithful service to the church. At the

risk of omitting some I will not make any lists, but I am encouraged in seeing in this long overview how many descendents of the early workers are now active at Onecho, even to the fourth generation. This is not the case in every instance, for the lure of the world is always strong, but the growth of the church can be traced to God's using the dedicated vessels that have been trained and prepared for his service.

An additional reason for encouragement is to be seen in the large numbers of men and women having no long-time ties to Onecho's past who are presently laboring so faithfully and effectively in the work here. Surely the expansion of the influence of this small country church to a broader field that includes and even goes beyond two urban areas indicates that much is being done right. Even more obvious is the fact that the Lord has been pleased to bless in ways that go far beyond the expectations of those hardy pioneers who began so simply "to unite together in true Worship and Service, to instruct their children in the Bible Truth and to have them come early to the Knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior; and to help in spreading the Gospel in Missionary Endeavor here at home and abroad."

Acknowledgements

Many individuals have contributed records and materials they have had stored away, and others have shared from their memories of these past days. I will not seek to list any of these, lest in so doing I omit some through failing memory. However, over the years the Church has elected Clerks to keep its records, and I acknowledge my dependence upon the sterling work of Mrs. Vera Rogers who served from 1961 to 1985 and her daughter Mrs. Rosalinda Schluneger who has held the position since 1985. Vera has on hand the membership books listing not only births, dedications, marriages and deaths going back many years, but also the names of those holding elected positions in the Church. Many of these records have been copied by hand out of earlier journals, and it is to be hoped that some day they can be computerized for easier access and safer keeping. We have been frustrated in this attempt to retrieve the events of the past 100 years by two tragic fires, and we would not wish the same difficulties on the person who writes the duo-centennial history of Onecho Church 100 years hence, if the Lord chooses to tarry so long.

Rev. Donald R. Aeschliman Ph.D.

About the Author

Donald Aeschliman was born at Onecho in 1924, grandson of Charter Members Fred and Rosa Aeschliman. His earliest memories are of work and fellowship at the church, and he early became involved in its various activities, including Sunday School teacher, chorister and secretary, church usher and Christian Endeavor president.

He graduated from Colfax High School, and after serving in the infantry during W.W.II attended Washington State University. During his final three years there he pastored the Federated Church of Palouse. He then attended Fuller Theological Seminary, graduating in 1952 with a Th.M. degree, and Los Angeles State College, graduating in 1954 with an M.A. in Secondary Education. During those five years he served interim pastorships at the General Conference Mennonite Churches in Downey and in Upland.

He was ordained by the Mennonite General Conference in 1954. That same year he and his wife Eva and their two small children sailed for South Africa as missionaries with The Evangelical Alliance Mission. They spent their first five years in Swaziland where he was principal and station head at a boarding school for Mulatto children. In 1960 they were transferred to Johannesburg where he was involved in a church planting ministry with the same racial group. This involved organization, teaching part-time in the Johannesburg Bible Institute, starting new works and obtaining land and erecting buildings for the young groups.

In 1970 the family, now numbering seven, was transferred to Cape Town to found and carry on a Bible Institute for the training of Mulatto ministers and missionaries. During the next 20 years the Cape Evangelical Bible Institute grew from an initial night school class held in a local Mulatto church to fully-interracial College with 50 full-time students, 200 part-time evening students and a full complement of buildings. During those years the family fellowshipped first at a Baptist Church and later with St James Church of England, where he served as supply pastor to various new groups and on two Commissions appointed by the Presiding Bishop. In the early 80's, after 7 years part-time work, he was awarded the Ph.D. degree by the University of Cape Town.

The family returned to Onecho in 1989 when he was 65, after 35 years on the field. Since their return he has served interim pastorships at Colfax Baptist Church, Cottonwood Creek Community Church and Steptoe Community Church. Between these assignments he has taught adult classes in the Onecho Sunday School.